

## CIVIL WAR ACTIVITIES IN POCAHONTAS

### Terminating in Battle at White Sulphur

On August 21, 1863 Averill started to Huntersville and halted his main command at Frost, while some of his command drove the Confederates down Knapps Creek until they reached the Northwest passage between Huntersville and Minnehaha Springs. Here the Confederates took a stand in the canyon. Averill hearing about it at Frost, on the 22nd sent Gibson's Battalion down Knapps Creek to make it appear that it led the army. Then Averill with his main army crossed over into the Hills through the Shrader settlement. By this road Averill rode into the deserted village of Huntersville in the rear of the Confederates. A squadron of cavalry under Col. Ohley was sent to learn the whereabouts of the Confederates and found them retreating towards Warm Springs. They were overtaken and there was continual skirmishing until the Confederates were driven through the Ryder Gap into Virginia.

Camp Northwest near Huntersville was the first elaborate camp to be built in the Civil War. It was located on the White farm, and there were substantial log buildings, much equipment, and a lot of supplies there. The camp was burned on August 22, 1863. The commissary buildings, stores, cabins, blacksmith shop, wagons, rifles, and so forth were destroyed and a lot of plunder carried away. All the wheat and flour in the mill opposite J. A. Reed's house was also destroyed. That night the Federals camped at Huntersville and waited for two regiments that were marching to join them by way of Beverly and Marlinton. On the 25th Averill marched to Warm Springs and Col. Jackson and Gen. Jones retreated before him to Millboro. Averill rested that night and having cleared Pocahontas of the Confederate army, decided to do the same for Greenbrier County. He therefore turned south and marched into Greenbrier.

To keep Pocahontas County clear of Confederates he sent back the 10th W. Va. to Camp at Marlins Bottom. It was the regiment of General Thomas M. Harris. It was his command that fired the last shot at Appomattox. After the war he served on the commission that tried the assassins of President Lincoln.

At the time he was in camp at Marlins Bottom, he has with him his twelve year old son, who has a horse of his own and who rode as the mascot of the "Tenth Legion". This twelve year old boy is none other than Hon. John T. Harris, the state clerk of the West Virginia senate and the most popular man in West Virginia.

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BATTLE CHEAT MOUNTAIN

September 13, 1861

The fortifications at Valley and Middle mountains were made because of a report by William Skeen, a lawyer at Huntersville, who furnished them with a map, and who pointed out that the railroad at Millboro was exposed to attack as well as the railroad at Staunton and that it was not as many miles distant by turnpike. Therefore, Robert E. Lee was sent to Pocahontas to put up fortifications at this place. He arrived at Valley Mountain on August 8, 1861. All histories say that his fortifications were on Valley Mountain. That in part is true for that was the pass that his troops watched, but his main camp was south of the pass through middle Mt. and the signs there today show the greatest amount of work. Lee's troops were volunteers and amateurs in the art of war. There was a lot of sickness in his camp that summer. Almost all of Lee's troops, as well as other confederate troops in the county that summer 1861 were lowlanders from the cotton country. Many of them had never seen a mountain before. That was why the mountains got them. There were very few mountain men in camp.

The Confederate forces took up all of Greenbrier Valley. They had armies at Travelers Rest (Camp Bartow) under the command of Loring. At Huntersville (Camp Northwest) at Marlinton and Top Allegheny. These troops came from all over the south. They had been rushed there owing to the fact that it soon became apparent the Virginia west of the great divide was not going to put many soldiers into the field to aid secession.

At this time Robert E. Lee was a brigadier general of the Confederate troops and was ordered to the Greenbrier Valley to take command of the units there. General Loring outranked Lee, but took orders from him.

McClellan swept every thing before him for he had railroad transportation into the center of the state, while the confederates were gathering from the south by slow marching and wagon train over the endless mountains. By the middle of the summer, McClellan had a

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the Cheat Mountain

large army in the Tygarts Valley at Elk Water. Here that army dug one of the biggest trenches and bunkers of the war to hold the road. To keep the fort from being flanked and surprised from behind, another army had made a most elaborate fortified camp at White's Top of Cheat on the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike. This place also lent itself to easy defense. The road here passes through a gap between two beautiful hills, and the soldiers fortified both sides of the road.

The Union and Confederate forces faced each other for about two months, each waiting for the other to give battle. Finally, about the middle of September, Lee planned to attack the fortifications at Elkwater. Realizing that the pike was closed by the fortifications at White Top, the orders were that on the night of Sept. 13, (Some authorities say the 11th), the army from Camp Bartow were to climb Back Allegheny then leave the road and silently pass Whites Top through the spruce woods and to fall in behind these fortifications. A part of the army was to stay and watch the army at White Top to keep them from joining the other Union forces. The rest of the Army from Camp Bartow were to drop down into Tygarts Valley and march up stream and attack the Elkwater fortifications in the rear, while Lee marched down and attacked the front. Never was a battle better planned, and never was one worse executed, but Lee could not have known what the spruce woods on top of Cheat were like or he would not have expected an army of southerners to get through at night. Lee's camp was in hardwood territory where a man could easily walk through. But to take an army through the jungles of Cheat in the night was an unheard of project. There were dense growths of spruce something like a hundred thousand board feet to the acre. There were many windfalls that could not be seen at night. There were great patches of laurel that even a Pocahontas bear could hardly penetrate. The ground was covered with a plant called hobbleroed that made a passage both painful and difficult. Also between Back Allegheny and Cheat was a strip of boggy, swampy country so covered with spruce that the sun could hardly penetrate. To add to the horrors of these southern boys, the first snow of the winter began to fall that night, and when the men got into that dark morass through which Cheat River winds